

Internationalization of Higher Education: The Pros and Cons

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Abstract

Globalization in the twenty first century has reshaped virtually all facets of human life, higher education inclusive. Higher institutions of learning respond to this new trend through internationalization. Thus, citadels of learning are integrating international dimensions such as internationalized curriculum, exchange programme, recruitment of international students' as well as hiring of prestigious international scholars in order to improve the school programme and cope with the unfolding challenges. Higher institutions of learning are undoubtedly becoming global actors and invariably undergoing aggressive modification. The modification does not only involve the curriculum taught in the school but also the aims and objectives of schooling, system of assessment and grading as well as academic governance and leadership are being revised in order to meet up with the contemporary global challenges. However different views have emerged in relation to internationalization of higher education. It has been regarded by some as a curse rather than a blessing for institution of learning, neo-colonialism rather than possibility for national development while to some it is an opportunity for global cooperation, cultural integration and economic interdependence. Based on these divergent views, this paper looks at the pros and cons of internationalization of higher education and how it can be effectively handled.

Key words: GLOBALIZATION, INTERNATIONALIZATION, HIGHER EDUCATION, INTERNATIONALIZED CURRICULUM

Globalization

The world is dramatically changing; every facet of human life is revolutionarily wearing new faces. New lifestyles, priorities and aspirations begin to emerge on daily bases. The political, economic, social and educational systems of every country begin to change in response to global trend.

The new revolution changes the world outlook and globalizes the whole world into 'global village'. Globalization has been differently defined by several authors and the reason is that the concept permeates every facets of life. To some it is an ideology, a world policy, a marketing strategy or international alliance. Pierre Bourdieu a French philosopher sees globalization as 'myth' or discourse used by neo-liberal ideologues to dismantle welfare states and construct a universe of individualistic consumers (Carnoy, *et al* ;2002). It is also described as a process of global economic and social interconnectedness and interdependentness of nations regardless of border boundaries (Ennew *et al* 2012). Some view it as a way of struggling for new market for the purpose of political, cultural and economic dominance(Galtung 1971), controlling world affairs through scientific and technology revolution, standardization or 'Mcdonalization' through the lens of capitalism (Beerkens; 2003)

However some view it out of economic and political context but rather as an imitation and adaptation of knowledge from one country to another. By and large, globalization consciously or unconsciously affects structures, content and procedures of every sector of nations in the world.

Education especially higher education being the centre for socio-cultural transformation and producer of

manpower is also affected by this global trend. There is pressure on higher education to produce 'international' human and capital resources rather than 'local or national' outputs hitherto provided. Hence there is a call for shift from being 'national institution' to 'international institution'.

Internationalization of higher education

Internationalization is an implication of globalization. It is defined as the process of integrating international and inter-cultural dimensions into the teaching, research and service of institutions (Knight & Knight, 2007). Through internationalization, higher education institutions accommodate international dimensions which include faculty involvement in international activities, an internationalized curriculum, study exchange programme and recruitment of international staff.

Thus, internationalization leads to migration of students and lecturers from other countries into a particular country, exchange of knowledge, technical know-how and expertise skills. With this, internationalization programme ushers in many advantages for higher institutions of learning in particular and the nation in general. Some of them are discussed below:

THE PROS OF INTERNATIONALIZATION

Creation and fostering of world social relationships

Every nation of the world has its own cultures, values and norms, in order to foster mutual relationship among these divergent nations there is need to understand and appreciate culture of each other. This is rightly achieved through internationalization. Several students from different nations of the world come together under one roof and share experience and cultural values. The higher institutions across the world also interrelate by sharing resources and expertise through exchange programme and knowledge through scientific research collaboration and conferences. Hence this bridges social and cultural structures in the world. Held *et al* (1999) maintains that this widens, deepens and speeds the world-wide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life. It thus serves as a way of international integration which leads to emergence of different world organizations such as UNESCO, OECD.

Internationalization expands world view

Through internationalization, the world view of both students and lecturers magnified and there is reconceptualization of citizenship. They understand other peoples' cultures and values better and rather than confining their citizenship to their country or region or accentuating ethnic egocentrism, they view themselves as world citizens and are aware of advantages of cooperating with others and opportunities accruable in working harmoniously together at national and international level. This invariably fosters world peace and harmony which are essential factors for sustainable progress and development.

Collaboration in academic research

Internationalization of higher education has paved way for more collaborative research work in all academic areas. The researcher in a particular higher institution now has opportunity to work with his contemporaries in other institutions with no barrier to national boundary. This has led to more standardization of academic research through sharing of resources and expertise. Also along this is exchange programme which allows students of a particular institution to travel to study in other institutions for a specified time. This therefore widens the students' horizon and enables them to form a formidable research team.

Economic and social benefit

Presence of international students in the host country and universities has economic advantage for both as the foreign students pay exorbitant tuition fee for the institution, they as well contribute meaningfully to the country economic through day to day transaction. Armstrong & Becker, (2004) maintain that many institutions world-wide engage in recruitment of international students to increase their income.

However despite all these pros of internationalization, there are also several cons of the programme.

THE CONS OF INTERNATIONALIZATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Shifting of role and function of university

The principal role and function of education in the society is to transmit and preserve the culture of the

society. University being a vehicle for achieving this lofty aim is expected to inculcate right attitudes of the society into the teeming youth of the nation. Thus, higher education is instrumental to the development of right citizenship. However the advent of globalization has changed this prime objective. Higher education today now focuses majorly on how to respond to international world market with the output of the institutions. Hence economic orientation becomes only crucial objective of higher education. The curriculum focuses on provision of knowledge, skills, and competence that will be useful for business and adequate for international competition while inculcation of values, norms and culture are the opportunity cost of the shift. The curriculum now favours scientific courses in lieu of humanities. On this paradigm shift Lewis (2006 p.3) laments 'this superimposition of economic motivation on ivory-tower themes has exposed a university without a larger sense of educational purpose or a connection to its principal constituents.' The implication of the shift is now reflected in our society with incessant social evils such as thuggery, drug abuse, rape, robbery etc. most especially among youth.

Eroding national citizenship and integrity

Internationalization has created a wide range of interconnectivity and interdependence of nations. As a result of this, many nations and institutions now focus on how citizens and students will be able to adopt and adapt international culture. English language becomes only dominant language in the world and the only appropriate mode of instruction in the institutions. Foreign universities are now preferred to home universities. The resultant effect of these moves is that patriotism and dedication to one's country and identity are being tactically eroded which thus usher in new form of colonialization or precisely neocolonialism (Beerkens, 2000). Besides from this, being international, subject higher education institutions to some external rules, policy and regulations of some international organizations such as OECD, UNESCO, world bank, IMF, UN and which sometimes may not be in congruence with national or institutional needs or interest.

Shifting control and priority of higher education

At the national level, globalization shifts the control of economy. What we witness today is privatization at a larger scale. Higher education programme which is hitherto single handedly controlled by the government has been allowed to be operated by private individuals or corporations. The private institutions, thus, provide education that best suit the interest of their 'client' at the detriment of the national objectives and needs. Funding of public higher education is also drastically reduced and institutions are left to source for their survival. Hence, higher education institutions develop 'consumerist mentality'. Students are now seen as customers who come to make transaction with the school and which must be satisfied. Education is therefore transformed into a product exchangeable in an open market (Altbach, 2004, Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). With this 'in the absence of any credible educational principles, money is increasingly the driving force of decisions in universities. Students best interest get lip service, but profitable enterprises get attention' (Lewis 2006 p.195)

Internationalization leads to brain drain and knowledge mismatch

One of the issues related to internationalization is mobility of people. Scholars can now move from one country to another. This has affected many countries especially developing countries because it has led to brain drain. Many intellectuals who might hitherto be of help to the institution of learning in their countries now leave their innate countries in seeking for greener pasture abroad. This 'brain migration' then invariably affects the quality of education provided in such countries.

The brain drain also extends to students who come from abroad but after their study fail to go back to their countries. Also, internationalized curriculum and programmes are sometimes poorly adjusted to local needs. It therefore creates knowledge mismatch between local need and acquired competence.

Internationalization affects quality education and widens gap among world universities

Internationalization has brought new dimension to activities of the school lecturers as well as school requirement for promotion and renewal. One of the promotion requirements nowadays is to publish in a renewed or index journal. To fulfil the requirement, the lecturers are busy with the research, neglecting prime mission which is to teach students and this invariably affects the quality education provided by the institutions. In addition to this is institutions' struggling to meet the world ranking. In chasing the 'shadow',

they sometimes leave the institution priority which may enhance quality teaching and learning (Hashim 2011). The purported ranking itself widens the gap among universities because the ranking process does not consider factors necessitating unequal achievement such as year of operation, vision and mission of each university, financial status etc. and a political manipulation is not out of play in the ranking process.

Conclusion

The paper discussed the pros and cons of internationalization. It has been described as double-edged sword which has both positive and negative side. In view of this, higher education institutions have to re-strategize in their bit to respond to internationalization and this can be regarded as 'new internationalization'.

University must get their vision and mission clear and hold wholeheartedly onto it in as much it serves the interest of the nation and entire students. Internationalization should not be seen as subordination but as a process characterized by mission differentiation. Institutions should then dwell into the process without compromising their noble mission. This can be done by choosing the right market and contemporary institutions with the same missions for the 'real game'.

There should be reorientation at national and institutional level on the purpose of education. Institutions of learning have to reconsider their principal function as inculcators of right attitudes and values to the students. Hence 'edu consumerism' ideology brought by globalization should be avoided. Students should be given right education without compromising quality. Government of each country should help along this line by increasing funding of higher education as this leads to overall social and economic development of nation in both short and long run periods.

Higher institutions of learning should endeavor to include character and good attitude, effective teaching as criteria for promotion and renewal of staff rather than over reliance on the publication.

The culture of the nation should be taken along with the western culture in the process of internationalization. For instance the language of the nation should also be used as mode of instruction as well as in international occasions. This will help to avoid over valuing of foreign language such as English language over the indigenous language.

If all these points are put into consideration during the process of internationalization then the programme will be a blessing rather than a curse for the institution, students and nation at large.

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